YUKON
MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT SUSTAINABILITY
SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL USER GUIDE

Yukon
Community Services

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Acknowledgements

The Yukon Municipal Government Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool was adapted from the Saskatchewan Municipal Government Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool with the generous permission of the Government of Saskatchewan Ministry of Municipal Affairs. Acton Consulting of Edmonton was the lead consultant for the Saskatchewan tool and guide development project.

Government of Yukon gratefully acknowledges this assistance.

1. Introduction

The Government of Yukon's Department of Community Services has developed this self-assessment tool for Yukon municipalities as part of the implementation of its Our Towns, Our Future (OTOF) initiative. The Community Affairs branch worked with the OTOF Implementation Committee composed of three representatives from the Association of Yukon Communities and three from the Government of Yukon.

A key objective of Our Towns, Our Future was to find out if Yukon municipalities are sustainable and, if not, what changes might be required to get there. A measuring tool for municipal sustainability was therefore identified as essential to provide an ongoing way to assess the state of the municipalities.

The tool provides an improved understanding of the overall health of the municipality. The intended outcome is a simple and relevant 'big-picture' representation that identifies barriers and opportunities for improvement, thereby aiding planning and program development. It enhances the professional and administrative capacity of local officials to become alert to problems and areas of concern before they become unmanageable.

This tool focuses on eight core areas of municipal sustainability: Governance, Administrative Capacity, Planning and Safety, Demography and Economy, Finance, Infrastructure, Service Delivery and Community Engagement. It reflects principles of practicality, accountability and evidence-based input.

Local governments are in the best position to assess their municipality's sustainability, given the necessary information and tools. This tool is for municipalities, with results for use by municipalities. Results need not be reported to the territory or shared with other municipalities, unless so desired.

Upon request, the Community Affairs branch will assist municipalities in following-up on results by continuing to work with them to develop appropriate resources and solutions to help address any identified challenges.

This document is intended to guide you through the use and interpretation of the tool and answer some of the "Frequently Asked Questions."

2. Getting Started

The tool is intended to be easy to use and provide municipalities with the opportunity for self-reflection without recourse to external expertise or significant expenses.

It is based on local knowledge and available data and can be completed by council, administration and/or together. On average, it is expected to take approximately two hours to complete the self-assessment tool. The length of time it takes to complete will vary based on the size of the municipality, availability of information and Council/staff experience.

Step by step instructions for how to use the tool follow below, including a section on viewing results that provides greater detail on how to interpret the scores.

3. Step by Step Instructions

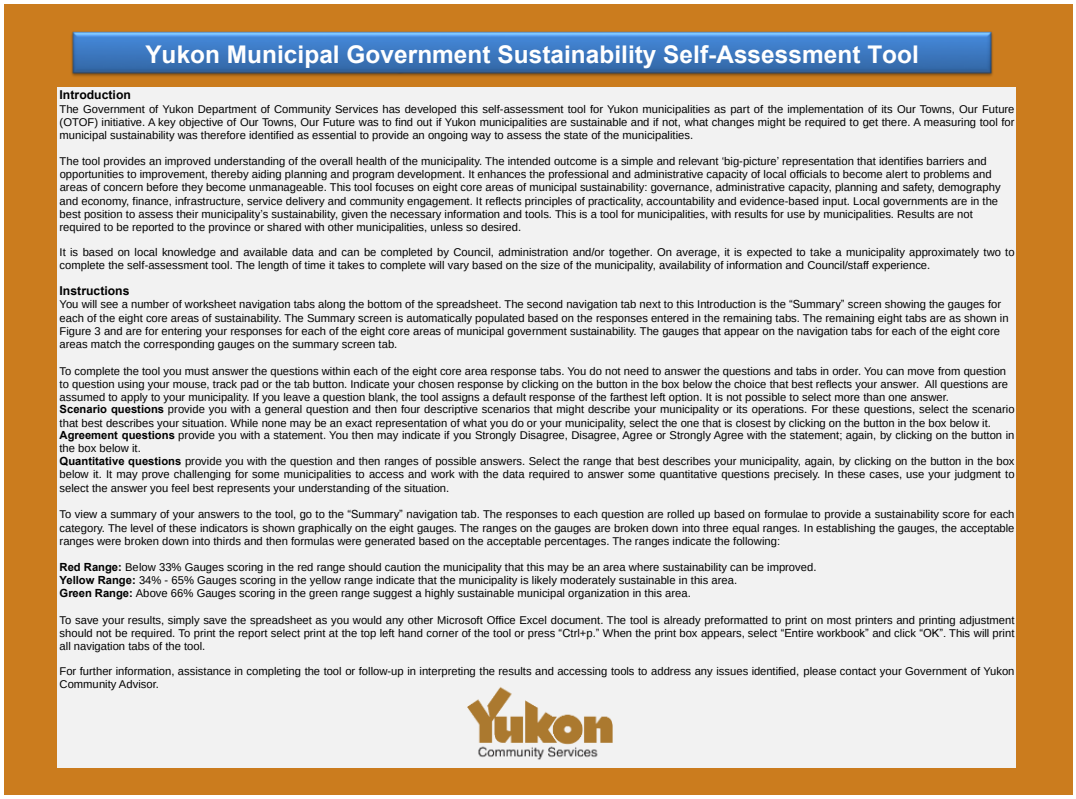
The tool uses Microsoft Office Excel software. If you experience technical difficulties in opening and operating the tool, please contact your Community Advisor.

3.1 Navigation

Once the tool is open you will see a number of worksheet navigation tabs along the bottom of the spreadsheet. The first navigation tab “Introduction,” Figure 1, gives a brief introduction on the tool including the basic instructions.

Figure 1 - Intro Tab

Introduction



Yukon Municipal Government Sustainability Self-Assessment Tool

Introduction
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The tool provides an improved understanding of the overall health of the municipality. The intended outcome is a simple and relevant ‘big-picture’ representation that identifies barriers and opportunities to improvement, thereby aiding planning and program development. It enhances the professional and administrative capacity of local officials to become alert to problems and areas of concern before they become unmanageable. This tool focuses on eight core areas of municipal sustainability: governance, administrative capacity, planning and safety, demography and economy, finance, infrastructure, service delivery and community engagement. It reflects principles of practicality, accountability and evidence-based input. Local governments are in the best position to assess their municipality’s sustainability, given the necessary information and tools. This is a tool for municipalities, with results for use by municipalities. Results are not required to be reported to the province or shared with other municipalities, unless so desired.

It is based on local knowledge and available data and can be completed by Council, administration and/or together. On average, it is expected to take a municipality approximately two to complete the self-assessment tool. The length of time it takes to complete will vary based on the size of the municipality, availability of information and Council/staff experience.

Instructions
You will see a number of worksheet navigation tabs along the bottom of the spreadsheet. The second navigation tab next to this Introduction is the “Summary” screen showing the gauges for each of the eight core areas of sustainability. The Summary screen is automatically populated based on the responses entered in the remaining tabs. The remaining eight tabs are as shown in Figure 3 and are for entering your responses for each of the eight core areas of municipal government sustainability. The gauges that appear on the navigation tabs for each of the eight core areas match the corresponding gauges on the summary screen tab.

To complete the tool you must answer the questions within each of the eight core area response tabs. You do not need to answer the questions and tabs in order. You can move from question to question using your mouse, track pad or the tab button. Indicate your chosen response by clicking on the button in the box below the choice that best reflects your answer. All questions are assumed to apply to your municipality. If you leave a question blank, the tool assigns a default response of the farthest left option. It is not possible to select more than one answer.
Scenario questions provide you with a general question and then four descriptive scenarios that might describe your municipality or its operations. For these questions, select the scenario that best describes your situation. While none may be an exact representation of what you do or your municipality, select the one that is closest by clicking on the button in the box below it.
Agreement questions provide you with a statement. You then may indicate if you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement; again, by clicking on the button in the box below it.
Quantitative questions provide you with the question and then ranges of possible answers. Select the range that best describes your municipality, again, by clicking on the button in the box below it. It may prove challenging for some municipalities to access and work with the data required to answer some quantitative questions precisely. In these cases, use your judgment to select the answer you feel best represents your understanding of the situation.

To view a summary of your answers to the tool, go to the “Summary” navigation tab. The responses to each question are rolled up based on formulae to provide a sustainability score for each category. The level of these indicators is shown graphically on the eight gauges. The ranges on the gauges are broken down into three equal ranges. In establishing the gauges, the acceptable ranges were broken down into thirds and then formulas were generated based on the acceptable percentages. The ranges indicate the following:

Red Range: Below 33% Gauges scoring in the red range should caution the municipality that this may be an area where sustainability can be improved.
Yellow Range: 34% - 65% Gauges scoring in the yellow range indicate that the municipality is likely moderately sustainable in this area.
Green Range: Above 66% Gauges scoring in the green range suggest a highly sustainable municipal organization in this area.

To save your results, simply save the spreadsheet as you would any other Microsoft Office Excel document. The tool is already preformatted to print on most printers and printing adjustment should not be required. To print the report select print at the top left hand corner of the tool or press "Ctrl+p." When the print box appears, select "Entire workbook" and click "OK". This will print all navigation tabs of the tool.

For further information, assistance in completing the tool or follow-up in interpreting the results and accessing tools to address any issues identified, please contact your Government of Yukon Community Advisor.

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The second navigation tab from the left is the “Summary” screen showing the gauges for each of the eight core areas of sustainability. The Summary screen is automatically populated based on the responses entered in the remaining tabs.

The remaining eight tabs are as shown in Figure 3 and are for entering your responses for each of the eight core areas of municipal government sustainability:

- Governance;
- Administrative Capacity;
- Planning and Safety;
- Demography and Economy;
- Finance
- Infrastructure;
- Service Delivery; and
- Community Engagement

The gauges that appear on the navigation tabs for each of the eight core areas match the corresponding gauges on the summary screen tab.

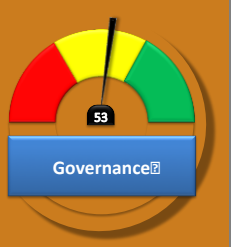
Figure 2 - Governance Response Tab

Governance

Governance Scenarios					
1	Which of the following best describes how your municipal Council is informed?	Councillors are typically required to undertake their own research and consultations.	Staff provide decision recommendations without rationales that are generally followed with little debate.	Staff undertake analysis and provide informal verbal recommendations with rationales to private meetings.	Staff provide formal written recommendations to public meetings that are balanced by Council with public input.
		○	○	○	◉
2	Which of the following best describes how your municipality's council makes decisions?	Council does not openly debate issues. Most items are decided before public council meetings through private discussions.	Council often postpones decision-making or revisits decisions at later meetings.	After some debate, Council makes decisions but these are occasionally misunderstood.	Council decisions are clear and timely and adopted by all as the municipality's position moving forward.
		○	○	◉	○
3	Which of the following best describes your municipality's relationships with other regional governments?	We do not communicate with other regional governments and have no common strategies or agreements.	We meet sporadically but otherwise operate all our services and build infrastructure projects independently.	We have undertaken some joint planning and projects but relationships are dependent upon individual staff or councillors.	We have very positive relationships and have regularly scheduled meetings to evaluate partnership opportunities at senior levels.
		◉	○	○	○

Agreement		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
4	Council meets on a regular schedule and conducts business in a timely fashion.	○	○	◉	○
5	All meetings are held in public except when authorized in compliance with legislation.	○	○	◉	○
6	Dates, times and agendas of meetings are widely advertised to the public.	○	○	○	◉
7	Council decisions are made based upon debate that is conducted only in formal public meetings.	○	○	◉	○
8	All council decisions are made by resolution or bylaw.	○	○	○	◉
9	Council meetings follow an up-to-date and effective Procedural Bylaw.	○	◉	○	○
10	Council orientation and training opportunities are adequate and well attended.	○	◉	○	○
11	Council is familiar with the Municipal Act and all the municipal plans.	◉	○	○	○
12	We have a satisfactory manual of policies to guide the administration.	○	○	◉	○
13	Our council has a mixture of first term and returning councillors.	◉	○	○	○

Quantitative		Below 60%	60-80%	80-90%	Over 90%
14	The average Councillor meeting attendance rate is:	○	○	◉	○
		0	1 to 2	3 to 5	More than 5
15	How many joint Council meetings with regional First Nations and neighbouring municipalities have been held over the last year?	◉	○	○	○



Yukon Municipal Government Sustainability Self-Assessment

Depending on your screen settings, you may need to scroll from left to right to ensure you can read all of the questions and responses. As well, it is important to ensure that you have maximized the Excel window so that you can see the response tabs on the bottom of the page. To maximize the screen, click the box in the top right corner.

3.2 Entering Responses

To complete the tool you must answer the questions within each of the eight core area response tabs. You do not need to answer the questions and tabs in order. You can move from question to question using your mouse, track pad or the tab button on your keyboard.

Indicate your chosen response by clicking on the button in the box below the choice that best reflects your answer. All questions are assumed to apply to your municipality. If you leave a question blank, the tool assigns a default response of the furthest left option. It is not possible to select more than one answer.

3.3 Types of Questions

On each of the tabs for the eight core areas, you will find a series of questions for you to answer. You will find three different types of questions: Scenarios, Agreement and Quantitative.

Scenario questions provide you with a general question and then four descriptive scenarios that might describe your municipality or its operations. For these questions, select the scenario that best describes your situation. While none may be an exact representation of what you do or your municipality, select the one that is closest by clicking on the button in the box below it.

Agreement questions provide you with a statement. You then may indicate if you Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Agree or Strongly Agree with the statement; again, by clicking on the button in the box below it.

Some of the statements ask you about two related aspects. For example, on the Governance tab, “Council meets on a regular schedule and conducts business in a timely fashion”. If you don’t meet on a regular schedule, you may choose to Strongly Disagree. If you do meet on a regular schedule, but in your opinion, you do not conduct business in a timely fashion, you might choose Disagree. If you meet on a regular schedule but also find a need for many special meetings to conduct business in a timely manner, a response of Agree may be appropriate. A council that is able to conduct all its business well within its regular meeting schedule may earn a response of Strongly Agree.

Quantitative questions provide you with the question and then ranges of possible answers. Select the range that best describes your municipality, again, by clicking on the button in the box below it.

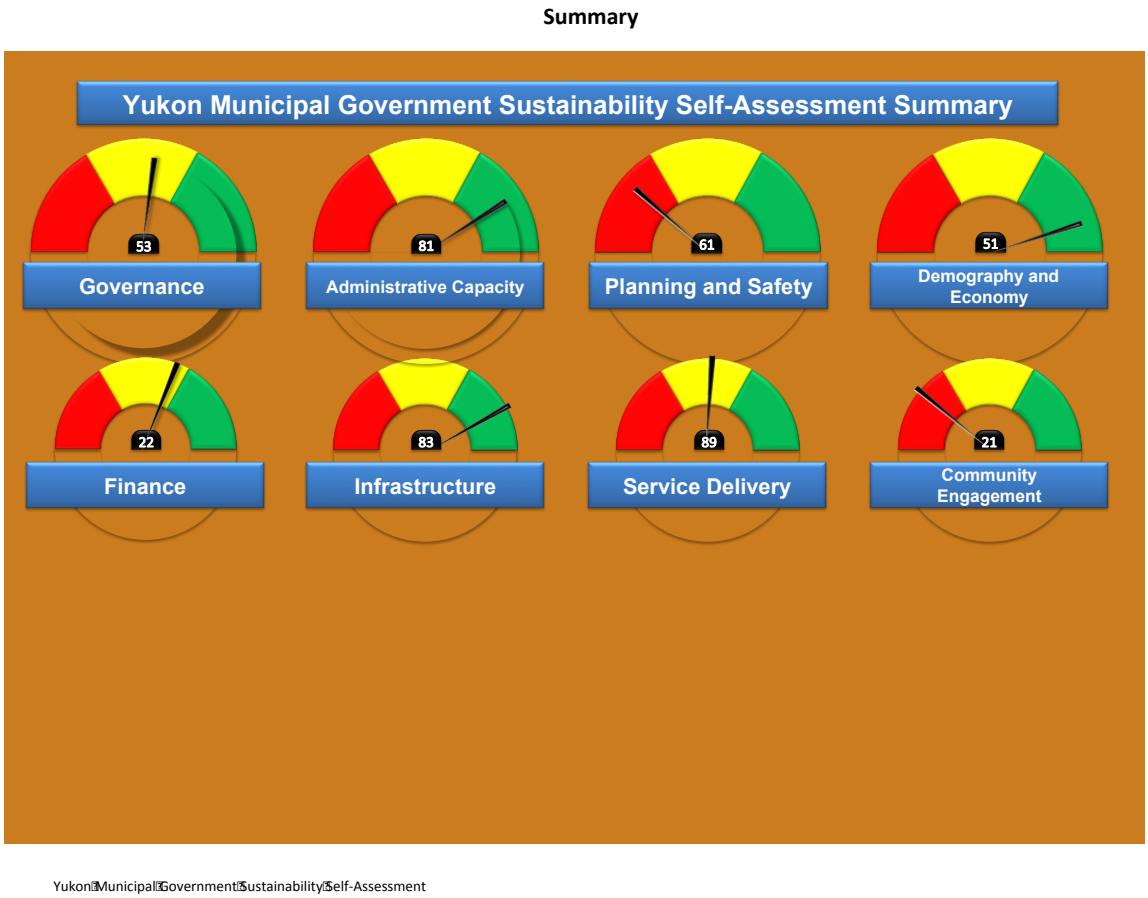
It may prove challenging for some municipalities to access and work with the data required to answer some quantitative questions precisely. In these cases, use your judgment to select the answer you feel best represents your understanding of the situation.

As you answer the questions, you will notice movement in your “Sustainability Gauge” for that category. These indicators move as you complete a question and move on.

3.4 Viewing Results

To view a summary of your answers to the tool, go to the “Summary” navigation tab. The responses to each question are rolled up based on formulae to provide a sustainability score for each category. The level of these indicators is shown graphically on the eight gauges (See Figure 3).

Figure 3 - Results Summary



The ranges on the gauges are broken down into three equal ranges. In establishing the gauges, the acceptable ranges were broken down into thirds and then formulas were generated based on the acceptable percentages. The ranges indicate the following:

- **Red Range: Below 33%** Gauges scoring in the red range should caution the municipality that this may be an area where sustainability can be improved.
- **Yellow Range: 34% - 65%** Gauges scoring in the yellow range indicate that the municipality is likely moderately sustainable in this area.
- **Green Range: Above 66%** Gauges scoring in the green range suggest a highly sustainable municipal organization in this area.

Please note that there is no overall sustainability gauge due to the diversity of municipalities in the territory. Differing populations and needs of the municipalities would impact the weighting that the core areas have on overall sustainability.

3.4 Saving and Printing Results

To save your results, simply save the spreadsheet as you would any other Microsoft Office Excel document. We recommend that you save a unique copy of the tool each time you use it so that you can compare contemporary and historical results.

Save the tool before printing. The tool is already preformatted to print on most printers and printing adjustment should not be required. Do not use the Print 'Entire Workbook' function. This function will damage the tool and data will be lost.

4. Further Information

For further information, assistance in completing the tool or follow-up in interpreting the results and accessing tools to address any issues identified, please contact your Government of Yukon Community Advisor.

Appendix 1 – FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions)

1. Are we required to report the results to Community Affairs?

Results are not required to be reported to the Government of Yukon, or shared with other municipalities, unless so desired.

2. If all our scores are "in the green," does that mean we are sustainable?

Achieving all scores "in the green" does not necessarily indicate that a municipality is sustainable. Due to the diversity of municipalities throughout the territory factors that impact the sustainability of one municipality may not impact another. Green scores indicate that the municipality is functioning at a high level but nothing can guarantee sustainability.

3. If all our scores are "In the red," does that mean our municipality is unsustainable?

Achieving all scores "in the red" does not necessarily indicate that a municipality is unsustainable. As indicated above, the diversity of municipalities throughout the territory can lead to the sustainability of some municipalities being more impacted by certain factors than others. Red scores help to identify areas for improvement.

4. What do I do with the results?

If completed by the municipal administration only, sharing results with Council is a good conversation starter for potential improvements. The results will also help to identify areas where goals can be developed for future strategic and operational planning.

5. Can this replace our CAO's performance evaluation?

No, this tool has not been designed to replace CAO performance evaluations. There are many questions asked that evaluate things that are outside of the CAO's control.

6. How do our results compare to other Yukon municipalities?

Currently, there is no intention to collate scores and generate an average. As the tool is used, if willing municipalities share results voluntarily, Community Affairs will continue to calibrate and refine the tool based on that data. If consultations with municipalities support a capacity to compare results in the future then this may be considered.

7. How can I share my results with other Yukon municipalities?

If you choose to share your results with other Yukon municipalities or the Government of Yukon, simply email your saved spreadsheet to whomever you

would like to have view it.

Appendix 2 – Definitions

1. **Administration.** A significant part of determining the sustainability of municipalities is associated with the capacity of municipal administration, its ability to provide council with accurate and reliable information and its ability to carry out responsibilities required by statute.

2. **Capital budget.** A plan that details the costs incurred to acquire, construct or improve municipal assets including infrastructure.

3. **Citizen engagement plan.** A document outlining the goals and activities that the municipality will undertake to engage its citizens in local governance and decision making. Associated costs should also be identified.

4. **Core infrastructure.** Assets managed by the municipality that are critical to the day-to-day functioning of the municipality. This could include buried utilities, roads, transit systems, bridges, water/sewage treatment plants, landfills and recreation centres.

5. **Demographics and economic trends.** Declining and aging populations can create challenges for municipalities. The economic and social bases of municipalities can be negatively affected. Municipalities have to recognize the impacts of a declining and aging population on tax base, overall economic position, types and costs of services required, and base for volunteer contribution. They may have to seek alternative methods of service delivery where possible.

6. **Emergency response exercise.** A simulated event designed to evaluate emergency operations, policies, plans, procedures and facilities; train personnel in emergency management and response duties; and demonstrate operational capability.

7. **Environmental standards.** Broadly accepted practices and design requirements that support the environmentally responsible and resource efficient practices of municipal assets throughout their lifecycle from design through construction and decommissioning to operation and maintenance.

8. **Finance.** Good financial management is one of the cornerstones of the success and continuity of any municipality. It ensures financial resources are properly managed and funds are spent in accordance with the stated priorities and mission of the municipality. This category of sustainability reflects on whether the municipality is following principles of fiscal responsibility, performing ongoing monitoring of its financial health and risks, and following best practices in accounting, budgeting, and the preparation and presentation of financial statements.

9. **Governance.** This is an evaluation of the elected municipal body in an effort to determine if council is complying with the requirements of territorial legislation and practicing principles of good governance. It is recognized that good governance is a requirement for sustainability.

10. **Infrastructure.** Municipalities provide service to residents largely through their core infrastructure portfolio. Infrastructure includes recreational, cultural and utility facilities. In keeping with the varied nature of the municipalities in the territory, there is a large variance in the scale and scope of services offered by municipalities. Proximity of services in municipalities may vary, as may the revenue generating capacity of their municipal structures. These unique elements must be understood and considered in sound infrastructure planning.

    No matter the type of infrastructure, it remains a public responsibility to ensure that infrastructure is managed in a sustainable manner. That is, to ensure that infrastructure will appropriately meet residents' needs now and into the foreseeable future at a manageable cost and consideration of its environmental impact. Need and cost consideration is dependent on an understanding of asset condition and the employment of robust asset management practices. Such practices identify life cycle costs and conditions, prolong asset life, and identify timing and cost of replacement.

11. **Lifecycle costing plan.** A documentation of the total cost required to maintain the municipality's infrastructure assets in full performance for its service life. This can include the design, construction, operating, capital and operating leases, maintenance, user and socio-economic costs.

12. **Lifecycle maintenance.** Maintenance activities performed on an infrastructure asset throughout its life to preserve and extend its useful life.

13. **Long term capital asset management plan.** A documentation of how municipal infrastructure assets will be managed over the long term. Management considers the financial, economic and engineering practices applied so as to maintain the asset in the most cost-effective manner.

14. **Maintenance.** Planned or unplanned activities related to preserving the asset in its original condition and for the purpose for which it was originally intended. Maintenance generally consists of: inspections, preventative maintenance, repairs and rehabilitation.

15. **Mitigation plan.** Documentation outlining the actions the municipality will take to reduce or eliminate specific risks to the municipality.

16. **Operating budget.** A plan outlining the level of spending required to support the municipality's day-to-day operations. Operating costs include labour, maintenance, fuel and insurance.

17. **Optional services.** Services and facilities that are provided based on the opinion of council that they are desirable. This often includes recreational and cultural services.

18. **Partnerships.** Partnerships are increasingly recognized as an essential component of municipal sustainability. Whether with other municipalities, not-for-profits, First Nations or private sector entities, partnerships enable enhanced capacity. When considering partnerships, mutual benefits beyond cost savings should be included.

Partners may bring efficiencies of scale and scope, specific technical expertise, enhanced service levels or reduce overall risk.

19. **Public Safety.** The level and type of municipal mitigation, preparedness and response capabilities to reduce or eliminate long-term risks to people, property and the environment from hazards and their subsequent effects is a major concern of municipal governments. Municipal public safety initiatives can encompass fire protection, bylaw enforcement, building inspections, emergency planning, street lighting and the monitoring of water and sewage treatment. Meeting public safety needs and legislated requirements is another key indicator of municipal sustainability.

20. **Public safety risk assessment.** A documentation of the public safety risks existing within the municipality. For each risk identified, the risk should be evaluated based on the probability that it will occur and the impact it would have. Then, actions to reduce the occurrence of the risk and/or mitigate its impact should be identified. Municipal public safety initiatives can encompass fire protection, bylaw enforcement, building inspections, emergency planning, street lighting and the monitoring of water and sewage treatment.

21. **Service Delivery.** The provision of basic services is a fundamental responsibility of a municipality. Determining whether a municipality is able to provide these services in a manner that meets public needs and legislative requirements is an important indicator of success.

22. **Staff training plan.** A documentation of the learning and development activities to be undertaken by an employee in a given time period. This could include on the job learning such as job rotation, cross-training and mentoring as well as formal training courses, conferences and seminars.

23. **Strategic plan.** A documentation of the municipality's vision for the future and its long-term plan to achieve this vision. This plan is intended to look at the municipality holistically, incorporating citizens' opinions, and giving council and administration a means to chart the future of the organization. The strategic plan should encompass all aspects of the municipality's operations and its plans.

24. **Succession plan –** A course of action outlining a process for identifying and developing internal personnel with the potential to fill key or critical organizational positions. Succession planning ensures the availability of experienced and capable employees that are prepared to assume these roles as they become available.